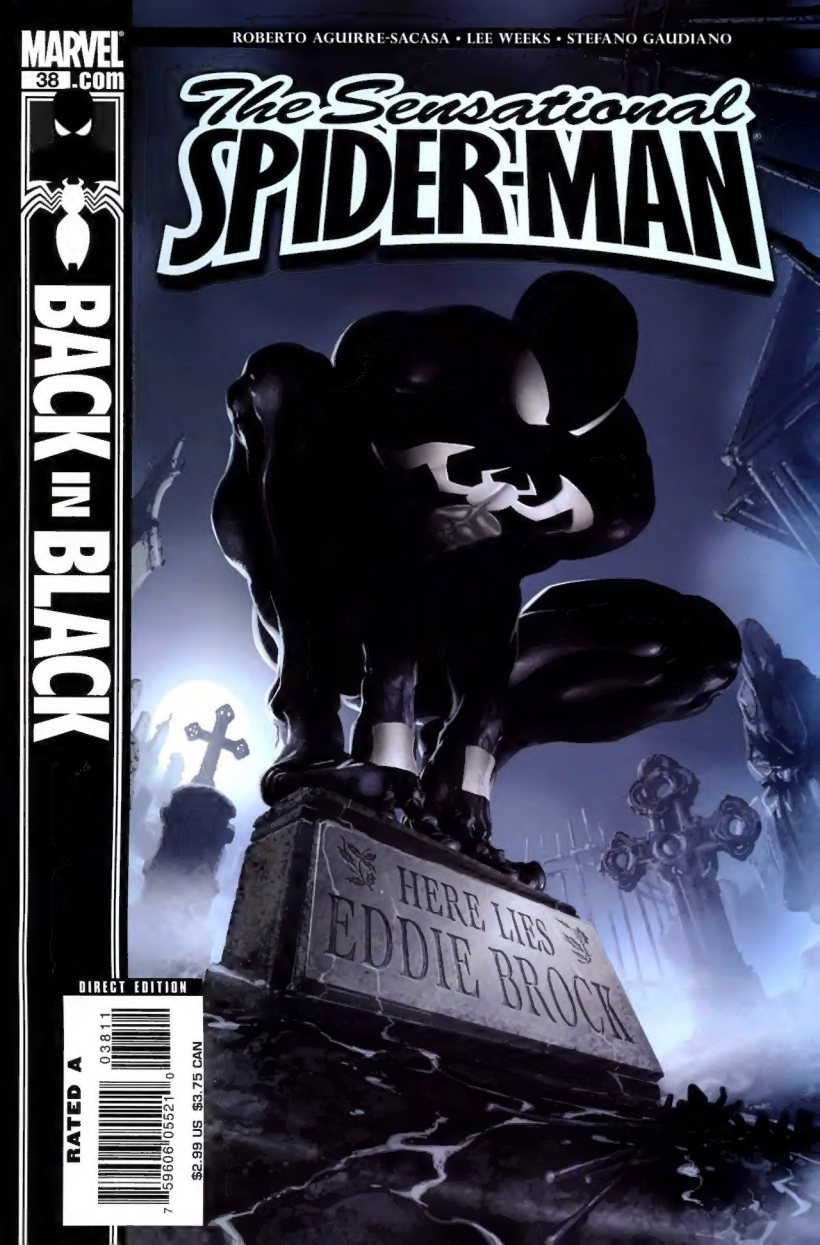
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BACK IN BLACK
ROBERTO AGUIRRE-SACASA • LEE WEEKS • STEFANO GAUDIANO
The Sensational SPIDER-MAN
HERE LIES
EDDIE BROCK
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My first year of journalism school, J. Jonah Jameson came to lecture us newbies. Among other things, he said (and I quote):
EVERY STORY CAN BE BOILED DOWN TO THIS ESSENCE:
A MAN IS BORN...HE LIVES... HE DIES.
BUT THE DETAILS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN...
...WHAT HAPPENS IN BETWEEN THOSE THREE IMMUTABLE EVENTS...
THE WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHY AND HOW YOU UNEARTH--
--AND THEN WRITE ABOUT--
--ARE WHAT WILL DISTINGUISH YOU AS JOURNALISTS.
I was twenty-two years old back then.
Virile. Healthy.

Interning at the *Daily Globe*.
I was happy.
But that was before...
Well, like the dealer says, "Pick a card, any card..."
The Sin-Eater scandal that *WRECKED* my career.
DAILY BUGLE
SPIDER-MAN SNARES *REAL* SIN-EATER
REPORTER BROCK EXPOSED AS LIAR
photos by Peter Parker
(Because of Parker.)
Then the suicide attempt that was interrupted by an alien symbiote looking for a host.
(Parker's fault. Again.)

Countless humiliations as the co-dependent villain VENOM.
(MOST at the hands of Peter Parker.)
My death sentence.
THE CURIOUS THING IS, MR. BROCK... WITH CANCER AT THIS ADVANCED STAGE...
YOU SHOULD BE DEAD, BUT IT'S AS THOUGH SOMETHING WERE KEEPING YOU ALIVE.
(Haven't figured out how Parker's responsible for THAT yet, but I will...)
My "conversion" and decision to sell the symbiote to the highest bidder...
...even a fellow villain...
...so I'd be able to donate the money to charity before the cancer finished consuming me.
WE'LL START AT...OH, TEN MILLION DOLLARS?
A second (more successful) suicide attempt when I learned that my good intentions were all for naught since the "new" Venom was killing innocents indiscriminately.
A man is born...he lives... he dies...

In MY case...alone, shriveled, in pain.
My days spent shuffling along the hallways of this hospital like a member of the living dead...
My nights spent NOT sleeping in my room on the TERMINAL WARD...
Haunted by memories...
And MORE than memories...
REALLY EDDIE, DID YOU THINK WE WERE THROUGH?

# The Last Temptation of EDDIE BROCK

PART 1 OF 2

| ROBERTO AGUIRRE-SACASA | LEE WEEKS | STEFANO GAUDIANO | MATT MILLA | VC'S CORY PETIT | CLAYTON CRAIN | ALEJANDRO ARBONA | WARREN SIMONS | JOE QUESADA | DAN BUCKLEY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| WRITER | BREAKDOWNS | FINISHES | COLORS | LETTERS | COVER | ASSISTANT EDITOR | EDITOR | EDITOR IN CHIEF | PUBLISHER |

DID YOU THINK YOU'D BE ABLE TO GET RID OF ME THAT EASILY?
SORRY WE KEEP HAVING TO DRAW BLOOD, EDDIE...
WELL, GUESS WHAT, MR. I'M-TOO-GOOD-FOR-YOU?
YOU MAY HAVE SOLD ME LIKE CATTLE...
...BUT I'M UNDER YOUR SKIN, EDDIE BROCK...
...A PART OF ME WILL ALWAYS BE UNDER YOUR SKIN...
THAT'S GOOD, EDDIE. THE MORE EXERCISE YOU DO, THE BETTER.
SO NOW I'M JUST WAITING FOR YOU TO DIE.
AND FOR THE DOCTORS TO PERFORM AN AUTOPSY AND SLICE YOU OPEN.
AND SET ME FREE.
SOON ENOUGH, CHUMP.
SOON--
ENOUGH!
But I've held on, haven't I?
And I started wondering WHY.
Was I a part of something LARGER? A GREATER design?

And eventually, it started becoming CLEARER...
NOW THIS IS INTERESTING...
MY NAME IS PETER PARKER AND I'VE BEEN SPIDER-MAN SINCE I WAS FIFTEEN YEARS OLD!
WELL, MERCY ME!
JUST LIKE THE OLD DAYS!
DAILY BUGLE
GUESS WHO'S BACK IN BLACK
And I started MUSING:
"Maybe my story ISN'T finished just yet.
"Maybe I'm being saved for...
"...for..."
WHAT?
OH, GOD--

How is this POSSIBLE?
Parker's family...HERE.
WITH me.
DELIVERED to me.
WHY?
WHY WHYWHYWHY WHY?
OH, EDDIE, EDDIE, EDDIE...
...STOP ASKING SO MANY QUESTIONS AND TOUGHEN UP.
THIS IS WHAT WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR.

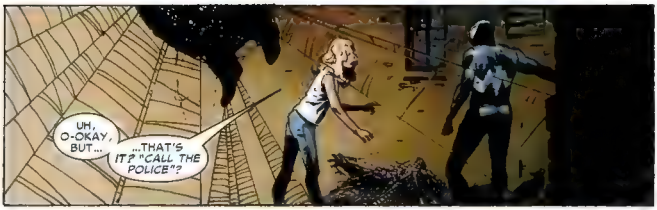
YOU LISTEN TO ME. YOU LISTEN TO ME RIGHT NOW.
MAY PARKER...
THAT BULLET...
THAT SNIPER'S BULLET WAS MEANT FOR ME.
"PETER DOVE...AND PUSHED ME OUT OF THE LINE OF FIRE...
"AND THE BULLET HIT YOU..."
I'M YOUNGER THAN YOU, MAY. MY BODY'S STRONGER. IF THAT BULLET HAD HIT ME...
I WOULD'VE BEEN HURT, BUT MAYBE NOT AS BAD AS YOU...

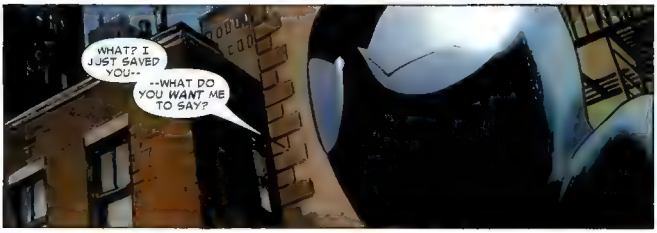
AND HE HASN'T SAID ANYTHING, BUT I KNOW THAT'S WHAT PETER'S THINKING, TOO, AND...
...AND I DON'T THINK WE'D SURVIVE WITH THAT KNOWLEDGE BETWEEN US.
I DON'T THINK I'D SURVIVE KNOWING I'M RESPONSIBLE, EVEN A LITTLE BIT, FOR YOUR...
...YOUR...
GOD, I CAN'T EVEN SAY IT BECAUSE I CAN'T EVEN IMAGINE WHAT WE WOULD DO WITHOUT YOU...
SO YOU LISTEN TO ME, MAY PARKER!

"FOR MY SAKE
"FOR YOUR NEPHEW'S SAKE.
"FOR THE WORLD'S SAKE.
"COME BACK TO US."
NORMALLY, I'D BE TALKING A MILE A MINUTE, BUT YOU CREEPS CAUGHT ME AT THE END OF A VERY LONG WEEK.

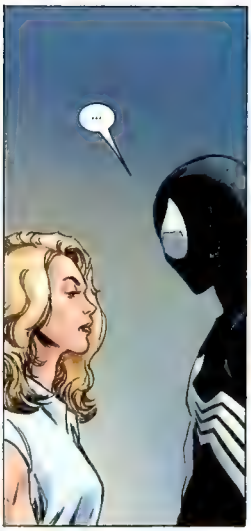
SO WE'LL JUST DO THIS FAST AND DIRTY.
This one's nose crumples like a hollow eggshell.
That one oses some teeth.
The guy with the knife--
--won't be HOLDING it aga n any time soon.
The whole thing takes...
THWIPP!!!
...less than a minute.
(But too TOO long...)

YOU--
--CALL THE POLICE!


UH, O-OKAY, BUT...
...THAT'S IT? "CALL THE POLICE"?


WHAT? I JUST SAVED YOU--
--WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO SAY?

I'M NOT SURE, THIS IS MY FIRST TIME BEING MUGGED AND ASSAULTED.
BUT DON'T YOU WANT TO KNOW IF I'M ALL RIGHT?
AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO OFFER ME COMFORT?


...

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

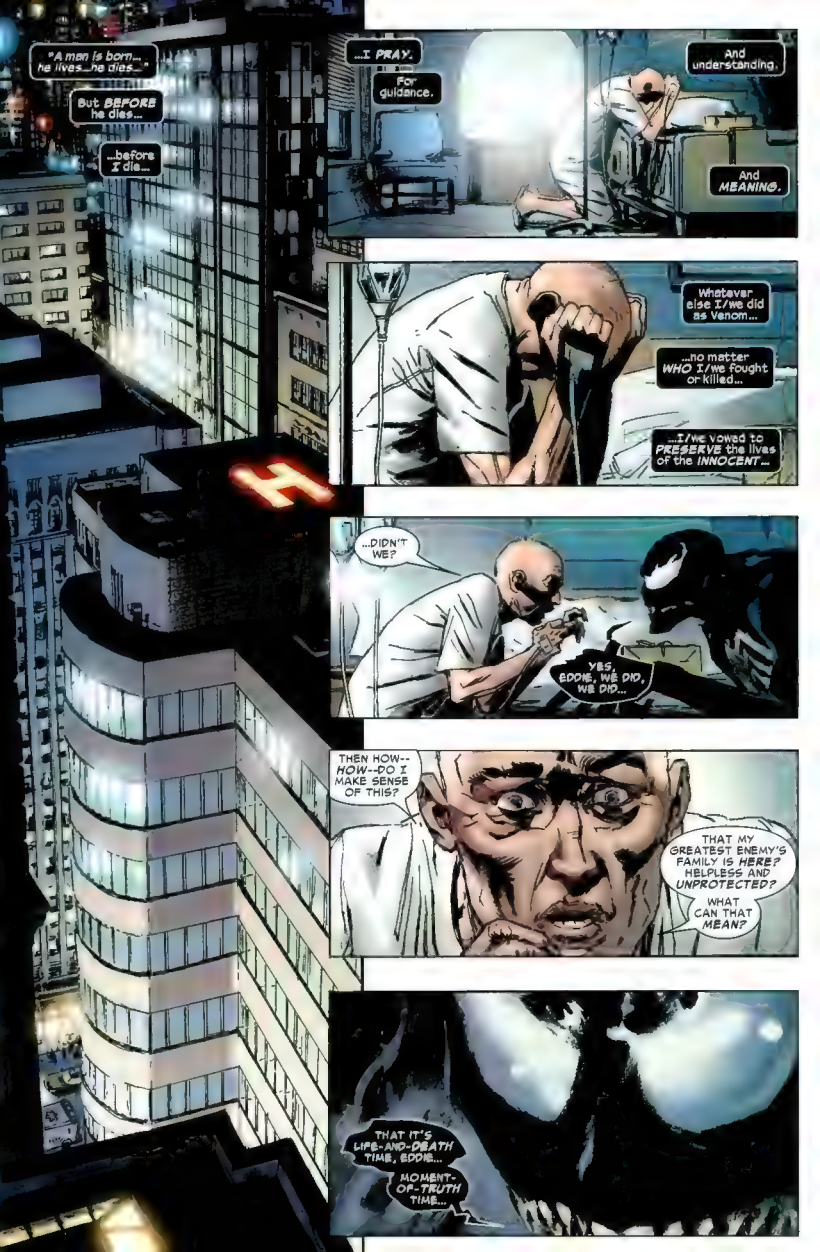
WELL... YES.
THANKS TO YOU.
(Thank GOD, because I can't waste any more TIME.)
LOOK...
AROUND THE CORNER, THERE'S A 24-HOUR DINER. YOU CAN CALL THE POLICE AND WAIT FOR THEM THERE. YOU'LL BE SAFE.
OKAY, SURE, BUT..
...ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
I'M ASKING BECAUSE YOU SEEM--
--HEY, WAIT--
"--WHERE ARE YOU GOING?"

An apartment building on 43rd Street and 11th Avenue, with a great view of the Hudson.
(Wasted, by the way, on the occupant of apartment 30-D.)
I'm wondering if I'm going to have to BREAK a window to get in...
...but NO, she left one open for me, just like last time.
One of the advantages, I guess, of being clairvoyant.
(No such thing as an unexpected guest dropping in.)
HELLO...? MADAME WEB...?
WHEN I WAS YOUNG AND BEAUTIFUL, I HAD GENTLEMEN CALLERS EVERY NIGHT, WOOING ME WITH CHOCOLATES AND FLOWERS...

..DITES-MOI, SPIDER-MAN:
WHAT TOKENS HAVE YOU BROUGHT ME THIS EVENING?
NONE, I'M AFRAID, MADAME WEB.
I...I CAME TO ASK FOR YOUR HELP.
BIEN SÛR. THE ONLY VISITORS I RECEIVE NOWADAYS ARE PEOPLE WHO WANT TO SELL ME SOMETHING OR PEOPLE LOOKING FOR ADVICE.
COME INTO MY PARLOR; I'VE ALREADY POURED YOU A CUP OF TEA.
ACTUALLY, MADAME WEB--
--YOU'RE STRUNG OUT ON BAD HOSPITAL COFFEE AND WOULD RATHER NOT IMBIBE ANY MORE CAFFEINE.
NEVER FEAR, SPIDER-MAN, THIS IS CALMING, HERBAL TEA.
S.T.
TELL ME WHAT YOU NEED..

Over a cup of Quietly Chamomile I bring Madame Web up to speed. I tell her about the sniper and how revealing my secret identity made us all targets and how my Aunt May's just barely hanging on, in a coma...
And as I'm talking, Madame Web just sits there, smiling that cold, CREEPY smile of hers, not saying anything...
(Since she's psychic and has ESP, I wonder how much of this is new information and how much she already knew...)
Finally, I circle around to "the ask"
...THAT'S WHY I WANT YOU TO PERFORM...
...I GUESS YOU'D CALL IT A SEANCE.
OH? MAIS YOUR AUNT ISN'T DEAD YET, SPIDER-MAN...
WHAT GOOD WILL A SEANCE DO?
WE HAVE TO REACH HER SOMEHOW, MADAME WEB. SHE HAS TO KNOW THAT WE'RE HERE, WAITING FOR HER TO WAKE UP...
WITH YOU... I DON'T KNOW, CHANNELING. MAYBE WE CAN ESTABLISH CONTACT...THROW HER A LIFELINE...

WHAT YOU'RE ASKING ME TO DO...
SUCH A THING *IS* POSSIBLE...
DEPENDING ON...
TELL ME--
ANYTHING--
NO, NO, SPIDER-MAN. NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU...
IT ALL DEPENDS ON WHERE YOUR AUNT *IS*...
AND WHETHER OR NOT SHE *WANTS* TO BE REACHED...
BUT...
...YOU'LL *TRY*, AT LEAST?
*I WILL.*
I'D DECIDED THAT ***BEFORE*** YOU CRAWLED IN THROUGH MY WINDOW, SPIDER-MAN.
I HAVE A SUITCASE WITH THE NECESSARY... *ACCOUTREMENTS* PACKED AND READY TO GO.


"A man is born... he lives...he dies..."
But BEFORE he dies...
...before I die...
...I PRAY.
For guidance.
And understanding.
And MEANING.
Whatever else I/we did as Venom...
...no matter WHO I/we fought or killed...
...I/we vowed to PRESERVE the lives of the INNOCENT...
...DIDN'T WE?
YES, EDDIE, WE DID, WE DID...
THEN HOW-- HOW--DO I MAKE SENSE OF THIS?
THAT MY GREATEST ENEMY'S FAMILY IS HERE? HELPLESS AND UNPROTECTED?
WHAT CAN THAT MEAN?
THAT IT'S LIFE-AND-DEATH TIME, EDDIE...
MOMENT-OF-TRUTH TIME...

SO HERE'S THE BITTER, BITTER TRUTH, EDDIE: NO ONE IS TRULY INNOCENT.
NOT PETER. NOT HIS WIFE, NOT HIS AUNT...ELSE, THEY WOULDN'T BE HERE, LIKE LAMBS TO THE SLAUGHTER.
AND, ULTIMATELY... A PERSON'S GUILT OR INNOCENCE ISN'T FOR US TO DECIDE.
DO THE HARVESTING, EDDIE. THEN LET SOMEONE ELSE SORT THE GOOD FROM THE BAD.
BUT...
BUT...
NO "BUTS," EDDIE! YOU'VE BEEN HANDED AN OPPORTUNITY HERE, TO MAKE YOUR LITTLE, PALTRY LIFE COUNT FOR SOMETHING. I'M NOT GOING TO LET YOU WASTE THAT BECAUSE YOU DON'T HAVE THE NECESSARY BUTS!

YOU WERE GIVEN A GIFT ONCE--A CHANCE TO BE EXTRAORDINARY--AND YOU THREW IT AWAY!!! AUCTIONED IT OFF!!
I'LL BE DAMNED IF I'M GOING TO LET YOU THROW THIS ONE AWAY!!
SO STOP PRETENDING YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT AND UNWRAP THAT THING I OVERHEARD YOU ORDERING--
TH-THERE WAS AN ARTICLE IN THE PAPER, NOW THAT HE'S WEARING B-BLACK AGAIN... THEY'RE ALL O-OVER THE CITY...
(God help me, but my dark half is RIGHT. There's only ONE reason I had Ricky's Variety make a special delivery to the hospital...)
UNWRAP IT, EDDIE--
--UNWRAP IT AND PUT IT ON!!!
I do as I'm told.
Fingers trembling, I unwrap the package.
Legs almost buckling beneath me, I slip the costume on.

It's cheap nylon.
It hangs loosely on my body.
It's NOTHING like the symbiote.
But it's everything...the ONLY thing...I need now.
LOOKING GOOD, EDDIE. LOOKING REAL GOOD...
NEXT: VENOM STRIKES!!

# NEXTISSUE

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